

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety**

**Local Action Research Partnerships: Building Capacity in Funded Grant Communities**

**Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative**

**Grant Solicitation**

**February, 2006**

***Program Background***

The Massachusetts legislature recently provided \$11 million for anti-gang grants through the Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative (Shannon CSI).<sup>1</sup> The Executive Office of Public Safety (EOPS) is the lead agency for implementation of this anti-gang effort. To enhance the effectiveness of this initiative, EOPS announces the availability of up to \$750,000 in Byrne/Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne/JAG) funds. Grants will be made to Local Action Research Partners to provide strategic, analytic, and research support to individual Shannon CSI grantees. EOPS anticipates making several awards to Local Action Research Partners.

A separate solicitation seeks a Statewide Youth Violence Research Partner to share lessons learned and to assess and document the results achieved by the Shannon CSI grantees. Information on the intended roles and relationships among EOPS, Shannon CSI grantees, Local Action Research Partner grantees, and the Statewide Youth Violence Research Partner will be available at [www.mass.gov/eops](http://www.mass.gov/eops) and at an information session for potential research applicants.

***Goal of this Solicitation***

EOPS recognizes that the Shannon CSI grant program is a significant new investment and represents a unique opportunity to study a variety of interventions applied by a diverse set of communities in response to the problem of youth violence. The goal of this solicitation is to assure that the Shannon SCI grant investment achieves the greatest possible reduction in youth violence and gang activity, through the use of Action Research.<sup>2</sup> Any Shannon CSI grant applicant community with greater than 100,000 population has been strongly encouraged to work with a Local Action Research Partner to provide strategic and data-driven advice and support. Other Shannon SCI grant applicants have also been encouraged to work with research partners. Funding limitations do not allow each Shannon CSI grantee to be guaranteed a Local Action Research Partner. Priority will be given to Local Action Research Partner grant proposals that will best advance the goals of reducing youth violence and contributing to the state of knowledge of best practices in preventing violence and gang crime. Interested Local

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative, see [www.mass.gov/eops](http://www.mass.gov/eops).

<sup>2</sup> Action Research is the term used by the National Institute of Justice to describe the process by which a researcher works in close partnership as part of a team to provide strategic thinking, critical analysis, and continuous feedback to improve program operations. NIJ has funded Action Research partnership grants to support the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program. For more information on those grants and the PSN program, see [www.psn.gov](http://www.psn.gov).

Action Research Partner grant applicants must identify a partner community or communities with whom to work on this effort. Applications for Local Action Research Partner grants must come from public or private research organizations, but must be accompanied by a statement of partnership from the community or communities applying for the Shannon CSI grant.

### *Scope of Services*

EOPS will make available up to \$750,000 for research and analytic support in partnership with Shannon CSI grant recipients. Local Action Research Partners will serve as project advisors, and will bring analytic and data-driven approaches into the strategy development and implementation phases of the project. Specific areas of assistance are anticipated to include:

- **Task 1 -- Collaborate with other Action Research grantees.** At the start of the grant period, EOPS will convene a meeting of all funded action research grantees, including all Local Action Research Partner grantees and the Statewide Youth Violence Research Partner to establish information sharing protocols to maximize learning across sites. Information sharing standards will include a set of performance metrics for various types of interventions. In addition, Local Action Research Partners may be asked to participate in periodic training sessions and information sharing meetings.
- **Task 2 -- Assist grantees with refining, updating, or presenting the problem definition.** Shannon CSI grantees will have developed a problem definition statement for their grant applications. At the start of the grant period, Shannon CIS grantees may need help from their Local Action Research Partner to narrow the scope of the problem to be addressed or to define it more specifically. On an as needed basis, Local Action Research Partners may help the grantee to refine or update the data, statistics, or analytic foundation of the problem statement. In addition, the Local Action Research Partner may help to describe and present the characteristics, patterns, and contexts of the youth violence and gang problem in the community or communities. This may also involve helping the lead agency in presenting this analysis to other stakeholder partners.
- **Task 3 -- Assist grantees in developing or refining and assessing the success of intervention strategies.** In their proposals, Shannon CSI grantees will have developed a data-driven strategy to target the specific problem identified. These are likely to be precisely focused interventions aimed at particular neighborhoods, particular offenders, and particular criminal activities identified as causing the problem being addressed. The role of the Local Action Research Partner in the design and implementation of the strategy is to provide continuous feedback throughout the life of the grant period. Local Action Research Partners will provide feedback from the data that helps refine and perfect the strategy, and where appropriate, suggest “mid-course corrections.” Using a variety of information sources (statistics, feedback from the field, and qualitative observations), the Local Action Research Partner will provide ongoing assessment of the progress of the selected intervention strategies. The Local Action Research Partner will also bring to the discussion the broader context from the research and evaluation literature so that practitioners are well informed about what works, what doesn’t and what’s promising. This is likely to include continuous feedback and participation in regular multi-disciplinary meetings, serving as convener or facilitator as appropriate.

- **Task 4 -- Publish a case study to document program results.** Finally, the Local Action Research Partner will document and describe both the programmatic outcomes and the lessons learned from the implementation. This should include a discussion of impacts on the service delivery system and the target crime and offenders.<sup>3</sup>

### *Evaluation Factors*

Applications will be judged based on the following criteria, listed in their order of importance:

- **Quality of the proposal.** Applications will be judged on the quality of their proposed approach and the degree to which the proposal reflects careful consideration of the possible implementation challenges. Other quality considerations include the feasibility of approach, the creativity of the proposed approach, and the potential for improving the state of knowledge on youth violence in the proposed community or communities.
- **Strength of the partnership and ability to draw lessons learned from the grant.** Selection of Local Action Research Partners will be based on the overall value to reducing youth violence and developing re-usable lessons learned for the rest of the Commonwealth. One key factor in evaluating this is the strength of the partnership between the researcher and the community. Secondly, the ability to gain transferable knowledge from the partnership will also be considered.
- **Organizational experience.** Applications will be judged on the likelihood that the organization can achieve successful results. Specific criteria include:
  - **Action Research experience.** Proposals should demonstrate experience working in a hands-on collaborative manner with operational agencies to define problems using data, develop strategies and then provide continuous feedback to refine strategies as the project progresses. The ability to keep a project on time and on track will also be considered as part of this evaluation. Research experience in law enforcement, criminal justice, community mobilization, or related research areas will also be considered. Where no previous experience in Action Research is available, a discussion of the relevant skills may substitute. For a discussion of the role of Action Research in community safety problem solving, please refer to “Lessons Learned in Preventing Homicide” found at [www.mass.gov/eops](http://www.mass.gov/eops).
  - **Experience working in collaborative approaches.** The Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative directs that grants be awarded to multi-disciplinary and collaborative approaches involving multiple stakeholders. Proposals must demonstrate an ability to work with multiple actors in a collaborative fashion and include a diverse range of perspectives. Experience facilitating meetings and group processes in a participatory and productive manner will be considered.
  - **Experience working with public safety and community organizations.** Proposals must demonstrate experience working with public safety and community organizations, and must demonstrate an understanding of the challenges of applying research and analytical approaches in these settings and how those challenges will be addressed.
- **Management and organizational capability.** This program will require significant coordination and the management of many issues, individuals, and sometimes competing agendas. Proposals should address the ability of the applicant to manage in

---

<sup>3</sup> This section draws on work by Lois Felson Mock, Senior Social Science Analyst, National Institute of Justice in defining Action Research

a challenging environment. In addition, the overall approach to managing the project should be discussed, describing who will be the leader of the project, and how the various individuals contributing to the project will be involved.

- **Cost effectiveness of approach.** Proposals will be evaluated on their ability to provide Massachusetts with a cost-efficient approach to achieving results.

### ***Application Format***

Applications must include the following elements.

#### **Statement of Partnership (2 pages)**

- This section should describe the relationship between the applicant research organization and the partner Shannon CSI grant applicant (for example, University X and Community Y). Any past experience working together should be discussed. If no prior experience working together is present, the applicant should describe the strategy and proposed methods for establishing a good working relationship. A letter of support or memorandum of agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities of partners should be included as an attachment. This section should describe how the research organization and the Shannon CSI grantee will work together to establish research priorities.

#### **Understanding of the Challenge of Applying Action Research to Youth Violence (2 pages)**

- Applicants should describe their knowledge of trends and issues in youth violence and community violence prevention efforts in the proposed partnership community. Applicants should also discuss the challenges inherent in Action Research, as well their proposed approach to addressing those challenges.

#### **Proposed Approach (6 pages)**

- Applicants should describe their proposed approach for each task listed in the scope of services. This section of the proposal should detail both the proposed method and a discussion of expected challenges and proposed solutions. This section should also include a proposed project implementation timeline describing the associated level of effort for each task. EOPS recognizes that the Local Action Research Partner timeline will be dependent on the Shannon CSI grantee project implementation timeline. Assumptions used in developing the level of effort should be stated here. In developing the level of effort, and in describing roles and responsibilities of each member of the proposed project team, applicants should, to the extent possible, use the standard terms defined below, in the budget section.

#### **Statement of Qualifications (5 pages)**

- This section addresses the experience of the applicant in working with collaborative public safety efforts. Applicants should address the evaluation factors described above. The expertise and capabilities of key staff should be addressed. The EOPS will require a single point of contact for management of the grant, and the management and administration qualifications of the designated individual should be addressed.

Organizational and administrative aspects of grant quality management should also be addressed, such as the ability to delivery quality products on an agreed schedule.

### Estimated Project Budget

- Proposals should use the budget worksheet provided with this grant solicitation. Applicants are encouraged to identify in their personnel cost section the role of each member of their team, using the following standard definitions, as appropriate to the proposed project team.

Role	Responsibilities
Project Director	Responsible for overall project direction and the quality and accuracy of all deliverables.
Project Manager	Responsible for day to day supervision and management of the project and the allocation of project resources.
Research Advisors	On an as needed basis will work with and advise the project.
Junior Researchers	Perform research, analysis, and data collection tasks.
Administrative Assistants	Assist with project coordination and management and the production of deliverables.

### Resumes of Key Personnel (no page limit)

#### *Other Application Details*

- Eligibility** – Due to the Byrne/JAG funding guidelines, state and local government agencies are automatically eligible. Any other organization wishing to apply should contact Chris Pohl, EOPS Deputy General Counsel, at 617-727-7775 to receive instructions on how to be certified as eligible to receive federal grant funds.
- Requirements.** The grants resulting from this solicitation will be funded from Byrne/JAG funds, and will carry with it all relevant federal funding requirements and restrictions. Matching funds will not be required for this grant. For more information on the Byrne/JAG grant program, see [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA).
- Deadline** – An information session for potential bidders will be held in March, at a date and time to be posted at [www.mass.gov/eops](http://www.mass.gov/eops). Interested bidders may submit questions to Sarah Lawrence, EOPS Research Director at [sarah.lawrence@state.ma.us](mailto:sarah.lawrence@state.ma.us). Responses to questions will be posted and updated periodically on the EOPS web site. **Final proposals are due to EOPS no later than 5pm on Friday, April 14, 2006.**
- Grant period.** It is anticipated that EOPS will select Local Action Research Partners by May 15, 2006, and will enter into grant agreements with the successful bidders as quickly thereafter as practical. The grant period is anticipated to be eighteen months. Shannon CSI grants are anticipated to last one year beginning in the summer of 2006. However, to allow for the Local Action Research Partners to assess progress, this grant period will extend beyond the completion of the Shannon CSI grants.
- Delivery instructions.** Applicants should submit five copies plus the original grant proposal. Completed applications are due by 5:00 pm on Friday, April 14, 2006. Emailed or faxed copies will not be accepted. Grant applications should be delivered to: The Executive Office of Public Safety, Attn: Sarah Lawrence, 1 Ashburton Place, Room 611, Boston, MA 02108.